DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 215 949 SO 014 049

AUTHOR Schine, Joan G.; Harrington, Diane
TITLE Youth Participation for Early Adolescents: Learning and Serving in the Community. Fastback 174.
INSTITUTION Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Bloomington, Ind.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-87367-174-0
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 34p.; Photographs may not reproduce clearly. Sponsored by the South Carolina State College Chapter.
AVAILABLE FROM Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Eighth and Union, Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402 ($0.75, quantity discounts available).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescent Development; Adolescents; *Community Involvement; Cross Age Teaching; Developmental Stages; *Developmental Tasks; Elementary Secondary Education; *Individual Needs; Problem Solving; Psychological Needs; Student Experience; Student Volunteers; Youth Opportunities; *Youth Programs

ABSTRACT

Children aged 10-14 need to assume responsible and challenging roles as part of their adolescent development. Based on the physical, social, moral and ethical, and emotional developmental characteristics of this age, adolescents need to discover and test new skills; develop a sense of competence; socialize to develop close friendships; take part in the world of adults; test a developing morality and value structure in authentic situations; and know that they can speak and be heard, that they can make a difference. Adolescents can accomplish much more than is usually assumed by participating in actual programs in which they take such roles as community problem solvers, peer tutors, museum guides, and hospital interns. For example, a community service program in a Long Island middle school is a successful youth participation program in action. For 10 weeks a group of seventh graders spend one morning a week as teachers in a local Head Start program. They have responsibility for designing and conducting the lesson, gathering materials, and evaluating their accomplishments. Although there are issues and barriers as teachers and administrators seek to initiate and manage youth participation programs, the rewards are worth the efforts as the resources of this early adolescent group are tapped. (Author/NE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED215949

Youth Participation for Early Adolescents: Learning and Serving in the Community

By Joan G. Schine and Diane Harrington

Fastback 174

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

X Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. Kliewer

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

SP 014 049

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 81-86310
ISBN 0-87367-174-0
Copyright © 1982 by the Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation
Bloomington, Indiana

This fastback is sponsored by the South Carolina State College Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, which made a generous contribution toward publication costs.

JOAN G. SCHINE **DIANE HARRINGTON**

Joan G. Schine is senior program associate with the National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY), and director of its Early Adolescent Project. She has served as program developer for elementary and secondary education at the Higher Education Center for Urban Studies, Bridgeport, Conn., and as project director for Cooperative Educational Services of Fairfield County, Conn. Schine was chairperson of the Westport, Conn., Board of Education and is a member of the National Education Committee of the American Jewish Committee. She is the author, with Diane Harrington and Barbara Shoup, of the NCRY publication *New Roles for Early Adolescents* (1981).

Diane Harrington works for NCRY and other educational organizations as a freelance consultant in curriculum design, writing, and media design and production. She has taught media production to elementary school students and to graduate students at The City University of New York as well as directed curriculum development projects in New York City public schools. She earned her B.A. at Wellesley College and her M.A. at Teachers College, Columbia University, where she is currently working on her Ed.D. in communication.

Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

Table of Contents

Introduction 6

Developmental Characteristics and Needs of Early Adolescents 8

Youth Participation and Early Adolescents 13

Successful Youth Participation Programs in Action 18

Issues and Barriers 28

Future Trends and Prospects 32

Annotated Bibliography 33

Introduction

A large, placid rabbit sits on a table flicking its ears and shifting its feet as a class of three-year-olds crowds around to watch and pet it. Some children are tentative; others, more excited, are a little rough. One of their teachers reminds them that this is a living thing like themselves; it can be frightened or hurt, and they must approach it gently. When all the children have explored the rabbit, they divide into three activity groups. Two groups listen and respond to stories about rabbits; the third is involved in a simple art activity—making rabbits out of paper, cotton, and paste. The groups shift from one activity to another in as orderly a fashion as one can expect from three-year-olds, so that by the end of the morning each child has participated in all three activities. Afterwards, the teachers meet to evaluate the lesson: How could it have been better? How did specific youngsters respond to it?

The only unusual feature of this scene is that the teachers who designed and conducted the lesson on this particular morning are *seventh graders!* They are part of a community service program in a Long Island middle school. For 10 weeks, they will spend one morning a week as teachers in a local Head Start program, with responsibility for designing and conducting the lesson, gathering materials, and evaluating the success of what they have done. Watching them as they teach three- and four-year-olds for the first time, one is struck by how seriously they take these responsibilities and by how warm and responsive they are to the children. Just barely out of childhood themselves, it is exciting to see them struggle to meet the adult challenge of acting as teachers.

The fact that these young people have chosen to try out this role is

surprising to many adults. It contradicts the stereotype that many have of early adolescents as restless and self-centered. It demonstrates that young people can do more than they and others often expect. And it gives both the young people themselves and their teachers a sense of accomplishment and opens up new possibilities as yet unexplored.

The benefits to young adolescents working in this program are two-fold: the experience of teaching younger children stimulates and enriches academic learning, and it increases their self-confidence and gives them a sense of accomplishment. For these Long Island middle school students the curriculum comes alive and takes on new relevance in the world outside the classroom. School has taken on a broader significance by meeting their needs to test and develop new skills, and by putting academic learning to work in the service of others.

This fastback is based on two premises: 1) early adolescence is a developmental stage with unique but definable characteristics, and 2) this group can accomplish much more than most of us assume.

It presents a theoretical and practical argument for creating more such programs, and provides descriptions of actual programs in which young adolescents take such roles as community problem solvers, peer tutors, museum guides, and hospital interns.

Developmental Characteristics and Needs of Early Adolescents

In recent years, early adolescence—the period from 10 to 14 years of age—has come to be seen as a distinct stage in human development. Early adolescents have much in common with the older adolescent group, but it is now generally accepted that their developmental needs are not the same as those of the so-called latency period of childhood from which they are emerging, nor of those of later adolescence toward which they are growing. Both researchers and educators have turned their attention to the young adolescent in an effort to understand and meet the needs of this "forgotten" age group.

There are several reasons for the attention currently given to early adolescents. There is evidence that the onset of puberty has moved downward two years in the past four decades, thus gradually but fundamentally changing the definition of adolescence. Along with physical changes have come behavioral ones. The incidence of drug abuse, smoking, alcoholism, delinquency and school crime, running away, and pregnancy has risen dramatically in this age group. This increase in alienation and antisocial behavior is the focus of much attention by the media, but with little examination of the underlying needs that drive some young adolescents to these extremes—needs that are shared by their far more numerous and less sensational peers.

What lies behind the violent antisocial behavior of some young adolescents and the quiet alienation of many more? It is not, as some would argue, a question of "What's wrong with the youth of today?" Rather, it is the early adolescents' search for self amid the uncertainties of physical and emotional changes within themselves, coupled with an environment that provides too few opportunities to flex their growing minds and bodies. Families, schools, religious organizations, community centers, and other institutions afford young adolescents few useful roles and minimal chances to build new skills and to test their developing strengths.

Researchers and educators classify the developmental characteristics of early adolescents as follows:

- Physical development—variability, uneven growth, awkwardness, and restlessness;
- Intellectual development—variability, at different stages of thinking, from concrete operational to formal operational (to use Piaget's terms);
- Social development—greatly influenced by the peer group;
- Moral and ethical development—beginning to formulate codes and standards of judgment;
- Emotional development—increase in self-doubt and introspection.

Based on these characteristics, one can draw a profile of the *needs* of this age group.

Physical and Sexual Development

Two striking characteristics of early adolescence are dramatic physical growth at some point during these years and the beginning of sexual maturation. Girls generally experience this two years earlier than boys, but for both girls and boys there is considerable variation in the exact age at which this occurs. This means that within any one class there will be students who have largely completed the process of maturing physically and sexually and others who have not yet even begun it.

The process of maturing physically and sexually is, in itself, an unsettling experience for young people. Their bodies are no longer familiar and predictable. Because physical growth is often uneven, they are awkward and uncoordinated. Restlessness is common as they struggle to get used to their new bodies. Hormonal changes lead to emotional changes and, often, extreme mood swings. They experience new and strong sexual feelings. They are uncomfortable and self-conscious about all these changes.

Intellectual Development

As with physical development, variability in intellectual development is also a common characteristic of early adolescence. According to Piaget, this age is basically a time of transition from the stage of concrete operations of thinking to the stage of formal operations. However, cognitive growth is often uneven. Students in a given class can

represent a range of levels of thinking. A young adolescent can be at one stage in one curriculum area and at a different stage in another area. He or she may even be working at slightly different levels from one day to the next.

The young adolescent who thinks in the concrete operational stage cannot reason abstractly or hypothetically; he or she needs concrete objects or examples in order to understand a problem. The formal operational adolescent, on the other hand, is quite capable of thinking abstractly. While early adolescents' solutions to problems may seem simplistic, this can be attributed more to a lack of experience than to a lack of thinking ability. It is obvious that the curriculum needs of young people vary widely at different stages of development. The challenge for teachers and curriculum developers is how to stimulate development and how to reach students in one stage without losing the others.

Social Development

At the same time young adolescents are maturing physically and sexually, they are also developing socially and emotionally. Self-concept and identity, sometimes sexual identity, are crucial issues. Social considerations are probably more important to early adolescents than nearly anything else, according to most writers and researchers in this field. The importance of the peer group, in terms of emotional support, psychological identification, achieving independence from the family, and learning values and attitudes is well documented. The strong need to belong to a group is probably related, in part, to the sense of vulnerability that young adolescents experience. While this need can take the form of extreme conformity and a fear of risk-taking, it can also be expressed in seeking out situations to work with others in the process of defining one's own unique identity.

Moral and Ethical Development

As their skill in thinking abstractly matures and as the peer group takes on greater importance in their striving for independence, young adolescents begin to develop their own moral and ethical principles. Where the child tends to see events and issues in isolation, the young

adolescent begins to see connections, to develop governing principles, to formulate codes and standards for themselves and others. These early codes are often quite rigid and simplistic, but they represent an important new skill for the early adolescent: the ability to judge their own acts and those of others, and to arrive at ethical decisions.

Emotional Development

According to Erik Erikson, two stages of psycho-social development predominate during early adolescence: industry/inferiority and identity crisis. In the industry/inferiority stage, the young adolescent is developing a sense of mastery over his or her environment. A healthy resolution of this stage leads to a sense of productivity, a sense that one can make and do things. An unhealthy resolution is the sense of inferiority, that one cannot do things well or even adequately. The identity crisis stage, in which the adolescent struggles to develop a sense of self, is probably the most crucial for this age group. It involves the need to maintain a continuity with past values and experiences and, at the same time, to integrate the internal and external changes that the young adolescent is experiencing. Areas of conflict include the search for faith in institutions and in people, the struggle to achieve autonomy and self-confidence, experimentation with roles and occupational choices, a new interest in sex and intimacy, the relationship to authority, and the development and clarification of values and commitments.

These struggles for self-definition produce a heightened introspection and an increase in self-doubt. With the growing ability to analyze and to engage in critical thinking, young adolescents become more aware of their limitations and begin to question their ability to cope successfully with the future. So much seems uncertain or unfamiliar that young people at this age feel inadequate and are particularly vulnerable to criticism—feelings they often try to mask with bravado and challenges to authority.

What Young Adolescents Need

This brief profile of the early adolescent suggests certain needs that teachers and program developers should consider when planning for this age group.

Early adolescents need:

- to discover and test new skills;
- to develop a sense of competence, an antidote to the self-doubt of this period;
- to socialize, to develop close friendships;
- to have an environment that is very much their own, where they can retreat from the demands and conflicts of the larger setting;
- to have freedom to take part in the world of adults and to move away from the isolation of childish roles;
- to know a wide variety of adults who represent different backgrounds and occupations;
- to know that they can speak and be heard, that they can make a difference;
- to test a developing morality and value structure in authentic situations;
- to share in making decisions within appropriate parameters;
- to have short-term projects with tangible or visible outcomes;
- to have support and sensitive guidance from adults who appreciate their problems and promise.

Youth Participation and Early Adolescents

There is a growing body of research that emphasizes adolescents' need to assume responsible and challenging roles. While they are in the process of figuring out their personal and social values—a key element in adolescent development—they need experience and practice in decision making and taking responsibility for the outcomes of those decisions. They need to see that their decisions affect other people, and that they "make a difference" in the real world. The community service program briefly described in the introduction, in contrast to most middle and junior high school programs, offers young adolescents these opportunities.

The National Commission on Resources for Youth has given the name "Youth Participation" to programs and activities that provide active, responsible, and decision-making roles for young adolescents. After studying hundreds of successful programs around the country, the Commission developed the following criteria for Youth Participation:

- Youth take active roles in challenging action that meets real needs of others.
- Youth carry real responsibility and make decisions affecting others.
- Youth work collaboratively with adults.
- Youth work as a group toward a common goal.
- Youth have an opportunity to reflect critically on their experience through group discussion.

These criteria suggest roles for young people that provide critical practice in preparing them for adulthood and in allowing time to use their energy in ways that genuinely benefit themselves and others. Over

and over, teachers and others have attested to these benefits and have spoken of the eagerness of young adolescents to become involved in Youth Participation programs.

Young adolescents can be *active* participants in their own education in various ways. Within the school, this can mean tutoring peers or younger children who are having trouble with a particular subject. Outside the school, young adolescents can use skills learned in school to help identify or solve community problems. For example, they can plan a community improvement project or visit the homebound elderly. By taking part in activities like these, young adolescents learn the meaning of *responsibility*. Often for the first time, they realize other people depend on them. From such experiences they also learn that there are consequences for their actions, including failure. For example, a tutor who is unprepared may fail to help a tutee study for an important test. On the other hand, the prepared tutor may see dramatic improvement in the tutee's work in a subject as a result of his or her guidance. As young adolescents learn to see and experience consequences like these, they also develop skills in decision making.

Young adolescents can make decisions on many levels, depending upon their experience and maturity. For some, the decision about what lesson to teach tomorrow is challenging enough. Others are ready to structure a whole semester's work with their tutees. In either case, they need to learn to evaluate the consequences of their decisions and revise plans that don't work. And they also need careful supervision to help them set realistic expectations and limits.

Youth Participation in Schools

Youth Participation requires new ways of thinking about the roles of teacher and learner. It also requires moving out into the real world beyond the classroom. This might involve making weekly visits to sites outside the school for a whole day or a few hours, or working within the school in the role of peer tutor or peer counselor. The key is that all of these require the application of knowledge and skills to real-life situations. For young adolescents, it is important that they are allowed to meet tangible needs of other people, so that they can see themselves as responsible and productive citizens.

There are several levels of involvement with Youth Participation and various ways it can fit into existing structures without disrupting the school. A single class, several classes on a grade level, classes in a particular subject, an elective course, or a club that meets before or after school hours can set up a Youth Participation program. The program can last for several weeks as a special project, or comprise a whole semester's or year's work. Youth Participation can be an extension of the academic curriculum, or it can be an extracurricular project for which interested students volunteer. All of these options are valid and workable, depending on the nature of the school and the program.

Ideally, Youth Participation becomes a way of making the curriculum relevant and alive—a concern of many teachers. Imagine putting health education to work by running a community health fair; or refining writing skills by publishing a history of the community; or working side by side with medical professionals in a hospital as part of the science curriculum; or putting classroom learning in social studies to work in a senior citizen's home. The success of Youth Participation activities like these depends on the quality of preparation and follow-up by the teacher in the classroom. When teachers and curriculum developers begin to look for ways for their students to apply what they are learning, they find that Youth Participation is a natural extension of the curriculum. Furthermore, difficult as the process may be, both they and their students learn more.

Youth Participation offers numerous possibilities for meeting the specific needs of early adolescents. Programs of Youth Participation allow young adolescents opportunities to make significant decisions, to try out new roles, to test new skills, to form new moral and ethical attitudes and opinions, and to experience the consequences of their decisions in the "real" world. By working with other youth who are functioning at different stages of development, the young adolescent's cognitive abilities are challenged and expanded. Opportunities abound to socialize with peers, often in new environments or situations, and within the context of working toward common goals. Collaboration with adults provides varied and positive role models and establishes new kinds of relationships with adults. Performing a service or accomplishing something that is significant to others builds the

young adolescent's sense of competence and self-esteem. Finally, the opportunity, with adult guidance, to reflect critically on what was done helps the young adolescent make sense of the experience and cope with self-doubt and feelings of vulnerability.

The special needs of this age group require that certain elements be emphasized and certain modifications made when planning programs. A Youth Participation program for early adolescents should include:

A wide variety of roles and activities. Program planners must consider the tremendous variation in physical, mental, and emotional maturity in this age group and must acknowledge and respect the wide swings in emotions and behaviors on a day-to-day or even hour-to-hour basis.

Projects that are short-term or structured with a series of clear steps. Young adolescents need a distinct feeling of relevancy in their lives. They need to be able to see progress along the way in order to feel comfortable working on a project.

Visible rewards. Concrete and early positive outcomes are crucial in helping the young adolescent build confidence and a sense of self through acts that have real consequences.

Structure, coupled with flexibility. While exploration is crucial, few young adolescents have the skill to deal with a highly ambiguous environment. A well-structured program allows freedom and flexibility within clearly defined boundaries that they help to establish. Full understanding of expectations, logistics, and consequences helps give young adolescents the courage to grow.

Collegial relationships with adults. Parents, teachers, program leaders, and community resource people assist youth in learning about the wider world.

The role of adult facilitator is important in any youth program, but it is crucial in programs for young adolescents, who need more guidance than older teens. There are two common mistakes that adult facilitators make. One is to think that Youth Participation means letting youth "do their own thing" without any guidance. The second mistake is to be too much in charge, so that the youth involved have no real responsibility. The adult leader who completely sets up the program

and assigns youth to a community service project without their input is likely to face apathy, resentment, or even rebellion. Both extremes sabotage the intent of Youth Participation. Young adolescents need to be given real choices and responsibilities, but within a secure structure that allows enough freedom to learn from their mistakes.

Another crucial element in any program for young adolescents is the opportunity for them to learn from their experiences, to reflect on what has happened and what this means in their present and future lives, and then to act on the insights gained. Reflection is not an automatic occurrence with young adolescents (they often are eager to get on with the next project), but it is a key to the success of Youth Participation for this age group. Sessions for reflective activities can be scheduled once a week in the classroom or informally, depending on the nature of the project. These activities may take the form of journal writing, observation, written evaluation, or a conference with the adult facilitator or the field site supervisor. Group activities such as listening, planning, brainstorming, role playing, and formal observation are also possible reflective activities. Whatever activities are used, they must be concrete, related to the real experiences of the participants; and they must be carefully structured to help the young adolescents overcome their own self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy. Reflection is a cluster of skills that includes observing, asking questions, comparing and contrasting experiences, forming generalizations, and trying to apply these to new experiences. Such skills are not easy to learn, but their practice and refinement can provide several short- and long-term benefits: improved basic skills, increased problem-solving ability, a sense of community, a clear assessment of personal impact, and an improved program. For the young adolescents involved, a sense of taking charge of their own lives is one of the most important results.

Successful Youth Participation Programs in Action

Youth who live in the South Bronx ghetto of New York City create a community garden; in suburban Indianapolis students help each other through a peer tutoring program; in California students study with science professionals and put their learning to work as tour guides at a university museum. In Youth Participation programs throughout the country, young adolescents work as teachers, journalists, tour guides, child-care workers, medical assistants, farm hands, mechanics, and newscasters. They learn techniques that help them work together to solve problems in their schools and communities. The brief descriptions that follow show school programs that involve youth between the ages of 10 and 14 in *community service, youth teaching youth, problem solving, communication, internships or individualized placements, and curriculum expansion.* In each program described, young adolescents have been active participants with continuing opportunities to make decisions and to take responsibility. The programs were chosen to reflect the wide variety of structures, environments, and activities in which young adolescents have achieved success.

Community Service

Community Service Program—Shoreham, New York. The goal of this community service program is to take students out of the classroom to learn the kinds of things that can be learned only through real experiences: the caring functions; relating to people who are different

(because they are older or younger, or of a different race, or handicapped); and above all, responsibility.

There is a wide range of community services in which students and their teachers at the Shoreham-Wading River Middle School can participate. The major effort is projects in which two teachers combine their classes for 10-week units involving weekly visits to such field sites as day-care centers, elementary schools, senior citizen homes, or facilities for the handicapped. Extensive classroom preparation and follow-up are built into the project, which becomes part of the curriculum. Students make decisions within carefully defined limits and learn to take on adult responsibilities by planning and evaluating each week's activities at the field sites. Other kinds of projects demand less time and commitment, but still place young participants in responsible face-to-face relationships. In all projects students perform tangible and important services for other people.

Folwell Junior High School—Minneapolis, Minnesota. Folwell Junior High School set up a community service program for eighth-

Diane Harrington

A middle school student reads to young children at a community day-care center in the Community Service and Career Exploration program at Shoreham-Wading River Middle School, Shoreham, N.Y.

and r ·th-grade volunteers that provides real-life challenges. Eighth-graders work as tutors in seven elementary schools. Initial training sessions involve teaching and communication skills as well as gaining some familiarity with the various elementary school programs, ranging from traditional to open classrooms. Students then choose to work in a school that matches their own interests and needs. They also define the criteria by which they want to be graded. Ninth-graders are released one day a week for at least seven weeks to work with adult professionals in the community in such placements as day-care centers, law offices, auto body shops, TV stations, hospitals, homes for the aged, beauty salons, and children's health centers. They do not receive academic credit for their work, but they are evaluated by their site supervisors and assess the value of their own placements.

Youth Teaching Youth

Peer Tutoring Program—Indianapolis, Indiana. A peer tutoring program can be more than just giving "extra help." At Warren Township's Woodview Junior High School, eighth- and ninth-graders have not only achieved significant success in helping their peers improve their school work but have also gone beyond academics to make a real difference in the way students in the school relate to each other. An important part of the training workshop attended by all tutors is a serious consideration of the responsibility each tutor must assume. Discussing the difficulties all early adolescents face, students are encouraged to do everything possible to help draw their tutees into the mainstream of school life in addition to helping them improve their grades. In Woodview Junior High School, 22 tutors work on a one-to-one basis with students who have academic difficulties. The tutors are responsible for contacting the tutees' teachers in order to determine specific areas of academic need; preparing tests, drills, and exercises for use in tutoring sessions; and meeting with their tutees before school once a week.

A Language to Share—Newton, Massachusetts. In the Language to Share program, students in sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade bilingual classes teach their first language to English-speaking elementary school children. The tutors are trained by their classroom teachers and discuss all tutoring sessions with them. As part of their training, the

young adolescents explore their own cultural roots. They also study the needs of younger children, examine patterns of language use, and consider approaches for teaching a second language. After observing in primary grade classrooms, the junior high students begin working with their tutees, using many materials they have developed themselves. While helping others, these youth strengthen their own skills and gain knowledge, pride, and interest in their native language and culture.

Junior Curators—Sioux Falls, South Dakota. When a school district's desire to provide alternative programs for gifted youth coincided with a museum's wish to involve students in its operation, the Junior Curators Program was born. In Sioux Falls, gifted adolescents work as volunteer junior curators at the Siouxland Heritage Museum. They research, design, and help assemble exhibits and serve as tour guides for school and scout groups. While emphasis is on the learning experience, an important part of the Junior Curators Program is active decision making by the youth involved. The students make decisions concerning project design and what and how they will teach the young children who visit their town's Hall of Science.

Problem Solving

GUTS (Government Understanding for Today's Students)—Bronx, New York. Many view the South Bronx as a tangle of serious social problems, but the staff at Intermediate School 139 sees it as an environment for learning and growth. The youth in this troubled area were uninvolved in the school program and unfamiliar with their community's decision-making process until teachers and administrators introduced GUTS in 1974. Through this program, 12-, 13-, and 14-year-olds learn to identify problems in their community, investigate the history of the problems, and work with civic and business leaders to solve them. Working under staff supervision and participating in ongoing discussions in class about their work, students have organized, raised funds for, and conducted a community health fair. They have succeeded in getting the city to tear down abandoned buildings near the school, cleared the rubble-strewn lots, and created an award-winning community garden.

Maria R. Bastone

A student adds plants to the school garden, one project of GUTS (Government Understanding for Today's Students) at Intermediate School 139, Bronx, N.Y.

The projects that GUTS students undertake arise from the curriculum. For example, the original assessment of problems in the South Bronx started as an assignment to write essays about problems in the neighborhood. Completed projects become part of the curriculum, too. The community garden has been used in a variety of ways by Intermediate School 139 classes. An English class wrote a history of the garden. Home economics students developed recipes based on what is grown there. A science class used the garden as a laboratory. Industrial arts students made signs designating the names of plants.

Project ARIES—Charlotte, North Carolina. In 1972 two high school students translated their concern into action when, with the help of the National Council of Christians and Jews, they established Project ARIES to help the Charlotte-Mecklenberg schools deal positively with desegregation. Young adolescents and high school students work in integrated teams or "core groups" in their own schools to plan and implement activities designed to improve relations between blacks and whites. These activities have included disco dances that use both

"black" and "white" music; cafeteria activities such as "Take a friend (of another race) to lunch"; new games and sports programs; workshops for student councils; and workshops for teachers.

Involvement in ARIES is voluntary and all participants attend a week-long summer training program designed to help them develop leadership skills, problem-solving techniques, and sensitivity to their peers of different races and backgrounds. Students also attend retreats and meetings throughout the school year for further training. Decisions about all Project ARIES activities are made by students. Elected leaders are responsible for clarifying and enforcing the strict program guidelines developed by students. In April 1981, student leaders attended an evaluation workshop to prepare to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the 1980-81 school year. Their evaluation report will augment anecdotal information collected by the Project ARIES staff. In nine years, junior and senior high school students have come a long way in developing mutual understanding and respect among races. The project is also a model of the way a school system and a community organization can work together on mutual concerns.

Peer Caring—Hartsdale, New York. An interesting aspect of this peer counseling program is the way older students help younger ones gain the skills to help themselves. Teenagers from Woodland High School's Rap Room work with Bailey Junior High School students in their Peer Caring Program, which is under the guidance of the school psychologist who is director of both programs. Bailey's Peer Caring Program is carefully structured to allow young adolescents to tackle only those problems for which they are equipped, in contrast to the more free-wheeling Rap Room at the high school level.

Students may register for this program as an elective course during the school year or enroll for a 10-week summer training program. They follow a developmentally sequential curriculum, studying personality development and ways of helping within an experiential framework. High school students help train the younger adolescents and act as facilitators for the small groups called "magic circles." The junior high students, in turn, take their magic circles to elementary classrooms and act as facilitators in discussions with younger children.

The magic circle is the crux of Bailey Junior High's concept of peer

caring. Two high school students work with a group of 10 to 12 young adolescents with a series of "wheels"—incomplete sentences designed to trigger discussions of issues that concern this age group. A typical wheel might be: "A time when I felt really proud of myself was . . ." The resulting discussions will vary in length, depth, and intensity, and often veer off on any number of tangents, but always within carefully defined parameters so that the adolescents involved do not take on problems they can't handle.

Communication

Junior Historian Club—Ahoskie, North Carolina. In a time when many communities are troubled by the logistic and emotional issues of integration, fifth-graders at the Robert L. Vann School have drawn members of their community closer through researching local history. In 1979 members of the school's Junior Historian Club published *People, Places, and Things of Hertford County*, a booklet containing interviews with black and white county residents, photographs of

Maria R. Bastone

A student farm guide demonstrates a method of grinding corn at the Green Chimneys Farm Center in Brewster, N.Y.

interesting community sites, ghost stories, and old-time remedies for illness. While increasing their skills in reading, writing, research, and decision making, the students' project had a tremendous impact on some of the citizens they contacted. The principal reported that "the old folks had thought their lives were over, and here they are feeling useful and important. Some even called the school to thank us."

Vann's Junior Historian Club is one facet of the humanities-based Experiential Education Project of the Alliance for Progress in six counties in northeastern North Carolina. At the Vann School, fifth-graders are involved in Junior Historian activities during "enrichment and creative activity" periods on a voluntary basis. Black and white students of mixed academic abilities work together on projects that include quiltmaking, photography, and creative writing as well as the production of cultural journalism publications. The restoration of a century-old school bell that had once hung in the community's school for blacks was a particularly exciting project for the group. Working together on these projects builds new interests, helps create friendships, and exposes young people to different ways of thinking and making decisions. The students are able to see the results of their efforts, and this builds their self-confidence too.

Internships/Individualized Placements

Cooperative Science Education Project (CSEP)—New York, New York. At New York University's Medical Center, young adolescents in white lab coats and hospital ID tags are a common sight. Designed to motivate disadvantaged minority youth toward academic and career achievement, this program is an example of school and community working together to help young adolescents. Administrative responsibility for CSEP rests with the New York University School of Medicine; the New York City Board of Education has assigned one science teacher to work full-time in the program.

Four days a week a different class of approximately 30 eighth- and ninth-graders travels from Joan of Arc Junior High School to the Medical Center. The students divide into two groups upon arriving; half go to work with their preceptors (professionals and paraprofessionals who act as supervisors and role models); the other half go to a

Maria R. Bastone

This student is learning science techniques from his preceptor, a medical professional, in the Cooperative Science Education Project at Joan of Arc Junior High School, New York, N.Y.

fifth-floor laboratory where, with their science teacher, they have the opportunity to investigate and solve scientific problems in a professional environment. After lunch there is an hour lecture period. Following this, students reverse the morning preceptorship and lab sessions until it is time to return to school.

The three "core components," lecture, laboratory, and preceptorship, are supplemented by "enrichment components" that include supportive counseling services, minicourses, academic skills development, and a science fair at the end of the year. But the preceptorship is the central component of CSEP. Here students have the opportunity to see formal education put to creative use by adults holding interesting and rewarding jobs. In addition, students assume real responsibilities and are treated as colleagues by the hospital staff.

Emeryville Junior Docents—Emeryville, California. Since 1971 gifted third- to eighth-graders have worked alongside professionals at the University of California's Botanical Gardens and Lawrence Hall of Science. At the Botanical Gardens students are introduced to the

gardens and learn about botany, ecology, plant grafting, weather, and insects. Study at the Hall of Science focuses on the arts and sciences; some students construct simple motors, while others study butterflies with an entomologist.

After a semester of once-a-week study with professional employees on the job site, students select an area of interest and begin to conduct tours for visiting elementary school groups. Embracing a multi-ethnic group of low-income children, the Emeryville Junior Docent Program provides an opportunity for students to explore their abilities. Through working with teachers and college students, who act as mentors, and by having an opportunity to help conduct the business of established institutions, the Junior Docents learn about the world of work and about themselves.

Curriculum Expansion

Project Math Co.—Wiscasset, Maine. The result of this year-long project by eighth-graders at the Wiscasset Middle School was the production of a new kind of math textbook for their peers. The book contains summaries of interviews with community people in professions ranging from veterinarian to nuclear engineer; it then provides math word problems encountered in those careers. These word problems, says the math teacher, who is co-director of the project, are much more difficult than those in standard eighth-grade math books.

The project had two goals: to expand students' awareness of career opportunities and to highlight the relevance and importance of math in those careers studied. Forty-five eighth-graders participated in the project on a voluntary basis. They selected and researched careers of interest, interviewed professionals in the community, transcribed and summarized the interviews, and worked with the professionals they interviewed to develop word problems typical of each career. They also made decisions about layout of the book, met with printers, proofread the book, and held a press conference. The final product reflects their pride in their work and offers tangible evidence of their accomplishments.

Issues and Barriers

No discussion of Youth Participation or description of successful programs would be complete without realistically examining the issues and barriers likely to be faced by teachers and administrators who initiate and manage such programs. The National Commission on Resources for Youth (NCRY) has found that the problems faced in these programs are surprisingly consistent, despite differences in the types of schools, communities, and populations in which the programs are operating.

Schools are resistant to change. The programs may be complex and difficult to run. Teachers, parents, and community members are often skeptical about the value of Youth Participation programs and about the capability of young adolescents to benefit from them. And young adolescents, an admittedly difficult group to work with, often make the role of the adult leader in Youth Participation programs a frustrating and lonely one. To ignore any of these issues only leads to problems that could have been predicted and avoided.

Invariably teachers and administrators are confronted with the logistical problems of fitting Youth Participation activities into the school schedule. How does one schedule site visits without taking time away from other important educational activities? How does one find the staff to oversee a program like this in a time of shrinking school budgets, teacher cuts, and increasing teacher loads? How does one transport 30 or so young people safely and efficiently to out-of-school sites that may be miles away?

Existing Youth Participation programs have dealt with these logistical issues in different ways, depending on their goals, school and community climate, and other limitations. Some programs schedule their activities outside of the school day, before or after school, or

during the summer, or on weekends. A few programs pull students out of their regular classes, but this is often a problem that creates extra burdens for both teachers and students. Many programs have been successful in integrating their activities into the regular schedule. In the Robert L. Vann School, all students participate in "enrichment and creative activity" periods, of which the Junior Historian Club is one option. At the Shoreham-Wading River Middle School two classes on a grade level are scheduled with consecutive double periods once a week with two different teachers. This creates a half-day to make site visits in the Community Service Program.

Solutions to the problem of staffing are as varied as those of scheduling. Ideally, a school or district can hire a full- or part-time program administrator, as the Shoreham-Wading River school district has done; although even this program began with teacher and parent volunteers—the most common solution. The school principal or assistant principal may oversee the program as a whole, but most tasks like scheduling, locating field sites, and arranging transportation are done by teachers and parents. In some schools counselors work closely with Youth Participation programs. Clearly, running these programs demands commitment and energy that may be difficult to find.

Transportation is an issue only for programs that involve away-from-school sites. If the school or district involved in Youth Participation does not have its own buses, budget constraints will probably not allow for rental. This means that one must look to the immediate neighborhood for sites within walking distance (as the staff of GUTS did), or work within the school in peer tutoring or counseling (as in the Hartsdale Peer Caring Program). It may also be possible to enlist parents as volunteers to drive students to community sites.

None of these logistical issues can be resolved without administrative commitment and support. The importance of the school administrator to the success of any Youth Participation effort cannot be stressed too much. Without it, logistical barriers will remain insurmountable and teacher resistance or indifference will block the program. With an administrator who is willing to help solve the problems, or at least to support solutions suggested by the staff, special scheduling, use of school facilities, extra preparation time for teachers, and even help

with record keeping will be easier to manage. All of these can determine whether a program will be successful, or even whether it will survive.

Operating a Youth Participation program also has its own internal logistical difficulties. One of the most troublesome of these is locating field sites where personnel will not view visits by young people as disruptive. Sometimes local agencies may be reluctant to work with schools because they perceive Youth Participation programs as extra work for themselves. In other cases, it is because their past experience leads them to expect "one-shot" visits, like Christmas caroling, that have limited benefits for them. Youth Participation programs can overcome this resistance by working in just a few sites at the beginning and building a reputation for reliability and commitment. When their reputation spreads, then other agencies become more eager to work with them. Contacts through parents or staff at the school help them to establish relationships with agencies that are willing to give the program an initial chance. Careful planning and follow-up with personnel at the field site can solve many of the problems mentioned above.

Once agencies are found, appropriate placements must be made. In some programs students choose their own placements; in others teachers are more involved. With young adolescents, either approach can work, provided that choices are clearly defined with appropriate limits. Careful and ongoing evaluation of placements is necessary to help students assess the value of the experience and to ensure that placements are meeting program goals.

The attitudes and prejudices of the community and of parents can be another barrier to Youth Participation programs. Many adults doubt that young adolescents can make the kinds of contributions to school or community that Youth Participation promises. Stereotypes of young adolescents range from restless troublemaker to violent criminal; and such attitudes, even among the staff at middle or junior high schools, lead many adults to refuse to consider this kind of program. Prejudices like these are extremely difficult to counter, but school systems with existing programs have found that starting small, with clear and achievable goals and expectations, allows them to accomplish tangible positive results—hard evidence that skeptics can't ignore.

At a time when the credibility of schools is declining along with reading scores, and when parents and taxpayers increasingly demand accountability, Youth Participation program personnel will have to justify their efforts. Integrating their programs into the curriculum, publicizing their successes, and building a core of school and community support have been keys to the continued survival of existing programs. The best answer to parents who question the value of these programs is their own children's obvious enthusiasm and growth.

Involving community resource people and parents in the program from the beginning not only helps overcome the difficulties just described but also builds a group committed to the success of the program. In addition, resource people can alleviate the burdens on school staff. They can help plan the program, contact field sites, assist in scheduling and transportation, meet with students individually or in small groups, help raise money and locate resources, and do other jobs necessary in the day-to-day running of a program. The present director of the Community Service Program at Shoreham-Wading River began as a parent volunteer. Her growing involvement and commitment to the program, as well as her familiarity with all the difficulties overcome along the way, have contributed immeasurably to the program's continued support.

A final, and often unexpected, difficulty faced by adults involved in Youth Participation programs is their own loneliness and vulnerability. Over and over, adult leaders have spoken of the difficulties and frustrations they encounter in working with moody young adolescents, who may suddenly seem to take six giant steps backward. When faced with hostile colleagues, who may already resent the attention given to special programs or the disruption they create, or with skeptics who may be quick to say, "I told you so," or with questioning and aggressive parents, they may be ready to give up. Leaders of successful programs emphasize the importance of finding other adults who are experienced and sympathetic to help them over the rough spots by making suggestions, listening, or just commiserating. Operating a Youth Participation program is never easy; and anyone who attempts to do so without some kind of collegial support may be doomed from the beginning.

31

Future Trends and Prospects

There are promising indications that interest in young adolescents and their special developmental needs will continue to grow. The American Educational Research Association has recently established a special interest group in this area. NCRY has been working on a specially funded study of Youth Participation for this age group. The Center for Early Adolescence has played a critical role in gaining recognition for the special needs of this age group and continues to develop resources for teachers who work with them. And a new professional journal has recently been published, *The Journal of Early Adolescence.* These developments indicate the growing interest in this age group by researchers and others, and bode well for more school programs designed to meet their needs.

It is the belief at NCRY that, as more attention is given to the developmental needs of both early and later adolescents, programs in Youth Participation will also flourish, as witnessed by the growing number of programs established in the past 10 years. Through the energy and commitment of the adults leading these programs and the vitality and growth of their young participants, Youth Participation programs have been able to overcome the inevitable difficulties and should continue to flourish even with the growing conservatism and financial constraints of the 1980s.

It is not easy to grow up in today's world, nor is it easy to work with the adolescents struggling to do so. But the rewards are worth the efforts—for communities that cannot ignore the untapped resources of this age group, for schools that must learn to meet their needs, for teachers and other adults who are tired of frustration and routine, and for young adolescents themselves whose struggles will lead to new strengths.

Annotated Bibliography

Erikson, Erik. *Identity: Youth and Crisis.* New York: W. W. Norton, 1968.

A seminal work by one of the influential figures in the field of human development. For insights into early adolescence, the chapter on "The Life Cycle: Epigenesis of Identity" is especially recommended.

James, Charity. *Beyond Customs: An Educator's Journey.* New York: Agathon Press, 1974.

Based on the author's extensive experience in English and American schools, this work integrates knowledge and insights about adolescents, creativity, curriculum, and the society. A chapter on "Some Educational Needs of Adolescents" merits special attention.

Kagan, Jerome, ed. "Twelve to Sixteen: Early Adolescence." *Daedalus* 100, no. 4 (1971).

Articles by Robert Coles, Jerome Kagan, Lawrence Kohlberg, and others cover physical development, intellectual growth, problems for schools, and a full range of issues related to the age group.

Konopka, Gisela. "Requirements for Health Development of Adolescent Youth," *Adolescence* 8, no. 31 (1973).

Delineates critical factors for healthy development and makes a case for giving adolescents "a genuine chance to participate . . . as responsible members of society."

Lipsitz, Joan. *Growing Up Forgotten: A Report to the Ford Foundation.* Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1977.

The author, director of the Center for Early Adolescence, argues for more thoughtful planning for this age group, and suggests ways in which their needs can be better met.

Mitchell, John J. *Adolescent Psychology.* Toronto: Holt, Rinehart & Winston of Canada, Ltd., 1979.

Especially useful for insights on early adolescence is the chapter titled "The Early Adolescent Period: Child-Adolescence."

National Commission on Resources for Youth. *New Roles for Early Adolescents in Schools and Communities.* New York: NCRY, 1981.

Combines theoretical rationale for Youth Participation for this age group with detailed case studies of effective programs and practical suggestions for implementation.

Pulaski, Mary Ann Spencer. *Understanding Piaget; an Introduction to Children's Cognitive Development.* New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

Piaget's work has had a powerful impact on our understanding of human development. Particularly relevant for those concerned with early adolescence are the chapters on formal operations, morality, and emotional development.

The National Commission on Resources for Youth, Inc., is an independent, nonprofit organization whose purpose is to expand opportunities for young people to participate in society. Through a national information-sharing network, NCRY seeks out, documents, and promotes programs in which young people, age 10-19, gain direct experience in the real world, carrying responsibility, making decisions, working collaboratively with adults and peers, and meeting genuine community needs—what NCRY calls Youth Participation. NCRY also works directly with schools and youth agencies to increase experiential and participatory programming and publishes a wide array of books, guides, how-to manuals and other materials related to Youth Participation. Its quarterly newsletter, *Resources for Youth*, goes to more than 30,000 subscribers. A list of publications, films, case studies of exemplary programs, and other resources is available from NCRY at 36 West 44th Street, New York, New York 10036.